



Loughton Lines

Welcome to *Loughton Lines*. Let me know if there's anything you want featured in future – it's your Club, and your newsletter.

AGM Says Hooray for Gay

The Club Annual General Meeting took place on 21 March. Club members heard reports from Committee members and discussed Club business, and also had the pleasure of the company of Club President Barry Edwards.



But really it was the Gay Shillaker show, as Gay was congratulated for her excellent third places overall in the V50 category in both the Essex and Chingford League final standings. She rounded off the night by deservedly being elected LAC Sports Personality of the Year. As the winter season came to a close Anna Clark and Lorna Gaffney also got special mention for their third place finishes in the Chingford League in the U15 and V40 categories respectively.

In other business, the members present voted on a proposed motion that from 2012, the Club's places in the London Marathon go to those members who have represented the Club most in league fixtures throughout the year.

The motion was carried and will come into effect from 2012. Which brings us neatly on to...

...Marathon Madness!

Well done to the LAC runners who competed in the London Marathon on 17 April. Rob Sargent ran 3:45.58, Duncan Rayney finished in 4:28.04, and Jackie Cox's training has obviously been paying off, as she clocked 4:43.07. Well done for representing LAC so well in very warm conditions.

May 2011

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Good Month for... Club President **Barry Edwards**, who announced at the Club AGM that he is soon to be married. Best of luck to you both from all the Club members, Barry... Also big congrats to **Monica and Tony Maycraft**, who celebrated their silver wedding anniversary on 3 May.

Bad Month for... **Anne Heeks**, who took a wrong turn during the Llantysilio fell race on 9 April – and ended up running about half a mile further (uphill!). Still, a bit of extra training never did anyone any harm, Anne.

New Member for the LAC Tots Relay Team

Club member Vicki Morris gave birth to a baby boy at 7:50pm on Mothering Sunday, 3 April. Baby Neulin weighed in at 7.15 pounds.

Well done, Vicki – we hope to see you and Neulin really soon. We'll have his LAC vest at the ready!



Thanks from the Mayor...

The Mayor's team has sent a big thank you to everyone who helped out at the fun run on 10 April. The event couldn't have taken place without LAC members marshalling the event, and the town council was very grateful. Now, Mr Mayor – how about an all-weather track in return?!

North of the Thames Report

Jean Hobbs reports from the annual race, first staged back in 1894 (she wasn't in that one, though!). The race pits us against illustrious clubs such as Shaftesbury Barnet and Thames Valley Harriers. For the full LAC results, see page 4.

Ploughing through yet more mud (and that was just getting to the course!), five vet ladies took part in the annual North of the Thames race in Kingsbury. Although the course was less 'undulating' than Hadleigh Wood or Chingford, Middlesex mud was just as wet and sloshy as Essex mud, but we survived and managed a third team place. We could even have a shower at the end of the race – which took the form of an icy, cold puddle/pond we had to run through to get to the finish line!

David Hobbs was the lone male LAC representative and ran a record time, as he was the driver of the 'happy bus' and Michaela Davis had to be back by 4:30pm to pick up her car from a garage in Romford. [*Bet Paula Radcliffe never has that kind of diary conflict! Ed.*] Well done, too, to George Richardson, who stood in a huge puddle for 3 hours timekeeping and even stayed to collect the ladies' medals.

Jean Hobbs

Calling All Veteran Athletes!

That's ladies 35 years and over, and men 40 years and over

The Eastern Veterans League started up again on Wednesday 4 May 2011. In order to compete this summer, you need to join the Eastern Veterans Athletic Club (EVAC) as a second claim member, and time is running out for you to get your membership forms/renewal forms in. The membership year runs from April to March. Download the form from www.evac.org.uk/memb.html, fill it in and send it off to the EVAC membership secretary with your cheque (details are at the bottom of the form).

The dates of the various matches are on the fixture list on page 8. PLEASE NOTE THE CHANGES TO DATES AND VENUES. THE INFORMATION GIVEN ON THE PRINTED LAC FIXTURE CARDS HAS NOW BEEN SUPERSEDED.

Could you please let the team managers know if you intend to compete or not (if you have not already done so). If you think you will struggle to get the membership form in on time, drop them a line – but still send the form in!

Ladies, contact Barbara Higgins – mjh1952@hotmail.co.uk or tel: 020 8508 3230
Men, contact Tony Babbs – babbsie1@yahoo.co.uk or tel: 020 8508 1362

We need people to help out with officiating and timekeeping etc. Tony and Barb have had some offers already but if you can't compete and would like to help out, or just fancy popping along and giving them a hand, let them know using the contacts above.

Results from Here and There

Indoor Athletics

At the British Masters Athletics Champs, Cliff Warren and Tony Babbs went up against the best vets in the country and notched up some impressive results.

Cliff landed silver in the M45 Triple Jump with a leap of 10.41, and backed this up with fifth in the M45 400m A final, with a time of 60.07.

Tony Babbs was third in the M40 200m B final (26.08) and fourth in his 400m heat (57.18).

The boys were out competing again at the Eastern Vets Athletic Club Indoor Champs where, together with Jim Harrison and David Hobbs, they finished second in the team competition. They brought home an impressive haul of medals:

Tony (M40):	200m, 2, 26.2	400m 3, 57.18	
Cliff (M45):	400m, 2, 60.35	800m, 3, 2:23	
Jim (M40):	60mH, 1, 11.32	Pole Vault, 1, 2.90	
David (V60):	60m, 2, 9.31	Long Jump, 1, 3.94	Triple Jump, 1, 8.36

Road

A multitude of LAC runners competed in the Physical Shield Relay on 29 March, which involved each member of a four-man (or woman) team running two consecutive 1.4k (hilly) laps each. Here are the results.

5 Loughton Juniors:	B Reeves (12:43); A Blundy (10:07); J Clark (12:29); J Halliday (9:50)
6 Loughton Ladies A: (2nd women)	L Gaffney (11:12); G Shillaker (12:22); A Clark (11:30); H Real (12:09)
7 Loughton A:	T Babbs (10:34); G Harper (11:19); G Georghiou (13:20); S Childs (12:07)
10 Loughton B:	S Hurley (13:07); C Warren (11:53); J Whiffen (12:25); J Hart (12:48)
14 Loughton Ladies B: (6th women)	A Heeks (13:32); H Newman (13:45); T Blundy (15:51); J Tovey (14:23)
15 Loughton Ladies C: (7th women)	M Davis (15:40); C Carfoot (13:44); I Petersen (15:34); M Hurley (12:55)

Congrats to everyone who took part. A special well done to Joe H and Alistair B, who were third and sixth fastest overall; and to Lorna G, who was third fastest woman overall.

Cross country

At the Chingford League Relays on 12 March, the men's team consisting of Tony B, Simon C, Duncan R and John H was a creditable sixteenth.

We fielded two women's teams: Gay S, Mandy H, Heather N and Helen R were fifth; and Gwen H, Yvette M, Jill T and Michaela D finished eighth.

Jon Mays and the Hobbs partnership made up an incomplete team, but had a good run nonetheless. Well done, all.

Finally, here are the results from the North of the Thames Champs held at Kingsbury on 26 February (see report on page 2).

Women (6k): L Gaffney (V40) 30:06; G Shillaker (V50) 32:44;
J Hobbs (V60) 37:45; M Davis (V45) 42:55;
I Petersen (V45) 43:46

Men (8k): D Hobbs (V60) 43:30

The women were an excellent third.

There are more results and photos, including those from the various fell races, on the website at www.loughtonac.org.uk. Have a look to fully appreciate the variety of events that Loughton runners compete in.

Loughton Lines

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Please send any LL articles or feedback to Mary, and any photos to Tony.

Quote from Viz

'Always keep tubes of haemorrhoid ointment and Deep Heat rub well separated in your bathroom cabinet.'

Loughton Limericks...

You may recall that LL launched a limerick competition as a result of Craig Veall's lovely little ditty in issue 2 about his hairy legs. Here are the top entries. Thanks for your contributions, budding poets.

Ode to the Track Season by **Jonny Knapman**

The winter was long and so was the training,
It was cold, dark and usually raining.
Dedication and perseverance are the tools of our trade,
Of strong stuff are we LAC runners made.

But no more cross country gives us good reason,
To rejoice in the changing of the season.
The blossoming flowers and the warming sun,
Mean there are jumps to be jumped and races to be won.
No room for tiredness and none for fatigue,
As spring ushers in the Southern Men's and Women's Leagues.

There's no need to panic, but there is need to run,
At the startling bang of the starter's gun.
Proudly sporting the purple and black,
Stay nice and close 'til the back straight attack.
Good luck, brave athletes, good luck one and all,
If you're doing the hurdles... try not to fall.

A Speedy Limerick by **Jean Hobbs**

It's now time to run on the track
I'll throw, run and jump – never slack.
I'll try to take heed
And pick up my speed.
Why is it I'm still at the back?

Training Ditty by **Caroline Real**

Tuesday reps make you tough,
Thursday circuits make you buff,
Saturday racing takes your puff,
And Sunday... rest is enough!

Isle of Wight Fell Limerick by **Caroline Real**

Steep fells on the Isle of Wight
Sweaty runners in the sea – what a sight!
Ascents, steps and pain
Loughton runners insane
Bring on that post-race pub night!

Johnny Cash the Nutter by **John Cash**

Tuesday evening, freezing cold and raining
John was telling his group about Helen's interval training
And about Rachel's nutrition notes.
No more crisps and shepherd's pie
But beans, oats, quinoa, rice and rye.
So off they cantered down River Way
One young runner was heard to mutter
'I think poor John's become a nutter!'

Interview

For this issue's interview feature, LL caught up with Tony Babbs, Eastern Vets Indoor Medallist and our men's team manager for the Eastern Vets League.

Name: Antony John Babbs

Age: 44

Where were you brought up? Walthamstow, east London

PBs: Selected (set in my forties, apart from the Marathon)

200m/24.9; 400m/54.31;

800m/2:06.1; 1500m 4:27;

10k/37:24; Marathon/3:28



How long have you been a member of LAC? Over 10 years.

What is your greatest sporting achievement? A bronze medal in the 400m at the British Indoor Masters in 2008

What's the best thing about LAC? I think, like most people would say, it would be how friendly everyone at the Club is – the banter!

And the worst? The mozzie bites when at the grass track.

Which sportsmen/women do you most admire and why? Trevor Brooking, Sally Gunnell and Michael Johnson, because they were/are great professionals and go about their business with no fuss

If you were Chief Executive of UK Athletics for a day, what would you do? Resign – it is too big a job for me

What one piece of advice would you give to a new LAC recruit? The most important thing is to enjoy the journey

Do you have any other hobbies and interests? Music (listening not playing), cooking and wine tasting

Who or what makes you laugh? Spike Milligan, *Porridge* and Cliff Warren doing the Triple Jump

Which three living people would you invite to a dinner party? Sorry, I can't narrow it down to three. Russell Brand, Mike Leigh, Michel Roux Jr, Paloma Faith and Allan Wells, but I am not sure if they would all get on (and the others wouldn't be allowed to mention to Allan that the USA weren't at the 1980 Olympics). If Karen [Tony's wife] was choosing it would be Bruce Willis, Robert Downey Jr and James Blunt: I wonder why?

What would be on the menu? White onion soup with scallops and black pudding; monkfish with a sweet chilli glaze on a bed of samphire and wild garlic, with chunky chips; and plum clafoutis – all washed down with a nice bottle of Grüner Veltliner... (Or maybe a few beers and beans on toast!)

If you were stranded on a desert island what two things would you take with you? An iPod and a generator

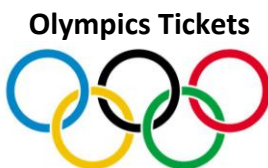
What's your favourite song/piece of music? This is a hard question but currently I am listening to 'God Only Knows' by The Beach Boys and '27' by Biffy Clyro

What are your favourite sweets? Not too bothered about sweets but I am partial to the occasional mint humbug

If you were a superhero, what powers would you like to have? I would be X-Ray Vision Man (please don't ask me why)

Tell us something about yourself that your fellow Club members don't know.
I dressed up in full make-up and evening gown plus accessories to watch Stevie Wonder at the Glastonbury Festival! (Actually some of them do know that)

Describe yourself in six words or fewer. Sociable, trusting, confident, passionate and random (but not in that order!)



Hopefully you've all sent in your application for Olympic tickets. Fingers crossed we all get some athletics tickets, but failing that, Peter C – ever thrifty as befits an ex-Club Treasurer – points out that you'll be able to see the men's and women's 20k race walk, the men's 50k race walk, the marathons and the road cycling for free. He also adds that perhaps the best opportunity ever offered of seeing the Olympic Games without paying was in 1900, when there was a balloon race; even the French couldn't think of a way of restricting spectators!

Club Contacts

Chairman:

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tony.maycraft@talktalk.net

Club Secretary:

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Press Officer:

David Hobbs 020 8508 7654
djdroftarts@yahoo.com

Forthcoming Events

May

Mon 2	Essex Champs, Day 1 (Young Athletes)	Basildon
Wed 4	Eastern Vets League*	Chelmsford
Sat 7	Southern Men's League	Hemel Hempstead
Sat 14 & Sun 15	Essex Champs, Days 2 & 3	Chelmsford
Tue 17	Club Champs Day 1 – 10,000m (S/V, M&W)	Loughton
Sat 21	Southern Women's League	Walthamstow
Tue 24	Club Champs Day 2 – Walks (All)	Loughton

June

Wed 1	Eastern Vets League HOME*	Lee Valley
Sat 4	Southern Men's League	Colchester
Tue 7	Woodford Open Meeting	Ashton PF
Sat 11	Essex Schools	
Tue 14	Club Champs, Day 3 – Endurance (S/V, M&W)	Loughton
Sat 18	Club Champs, Day 4 – 100m, 800m, PV, SP, LJ, DT**	Walthamstow (2pm)
Wed 29	Eastern Vets League	Chelmsford

July

Tue 5	Woodford Open Meeting	Ashton PF
Sat 9	Southern Men's & Women's League JOINT HOME	Lee Valley
Tue 12	Club Champs, Day 5 – 5000m (S/V, M&W)	Loughton
Sat 16	Club Champs, Day 6 – 200m, 400m, HJ, HT, TJ, JT**	Walthamstow (2pm)
Tue 26	Club Champs, Day 7 – 1500m (All)	Loughton
Sat 30	Southern Men's League	Thurrock

August

Tue 2	Woodford Open Meeting	Ashton PF
Wed 3	Eastern Vets League*	Southend
Sat 13	Southern Men's League	Parliament Hill
Sat 20	Southern Women's League	Braintree
Tue 30	Woodford Open Meeting	Ashton PF

September

Sat 3	Southern Women's League	Hemel Hempstead
Sun 11	Eastern Vets League Final*	<i>tbc</i>

Contact your team manager for start times of specific races. Remember to wear your Club vest in all races. Contact Paulette Regan on 020 8502 1975 to purchase one. Note that if you are entering championship events, you will usually be asked for your UK Athletics registration number on the entry form. Contact Tony Maycraft if you don't know your number.

* See page 3 for more details.

** As last year, we have set aside two Saturday afternoons to stage some Club Champs events at Walthamstow. The Club has hired out the track for the afternoon, and all Club members are invited to come along and give some events a try. So if you've always fancied a go at pole vaulting, this is your chance! Please put these dates in your diaries and support the Club if you can.

Please note that Saturday 9 July Loughton's Home Fixture in both the Men's and Women's Leagues. We would appreciate as much help as possible with organisation and officiating. Please contact Gavin Harper or David Hobbs if you are able to help.

Physio Update: Core Exercises

Each issue, Club member and professional physio Helen Real treats us to an update based on both the latest research and her practical work. In this issue Helen reminds us to keep our core exercises going throughout the summer during the hiatus from circuit training.

Most of you will have heard sports people talk about your core muscles, but do you really know what they are? Do you know what they do? And do you know how they work and how best to work them?

Your main core muscles are the pelvic floor, transverse abdominus and multifidus. You also have bigger global muscles that are important in maintaining good stability, such as your gluteals and obliques.

The core muscles are called stability muscles because they work to stabilise your joints. The other group are power muscles, and they act to produce power and movement. We can tell a power muscle from a stability muscle because of the type of muscle fibres they contain and how they attach to the bones. Stability muscles have slow twitch muscle fibres that can work for a long time at about 20% effort. Power muscles have fast twitch muscle fibres that work at 100% for a short period of time. (This is a bit of an over-generalisation, as you do get some overlap and training can change this.) The way the muscle attaches to the bone also tells us what the role is. A power muscle only has two attachments to the bone: one where it originates and the second where it ends. A core muscle, however, attaches to many different bones, which gives the bones a stabilising effect.

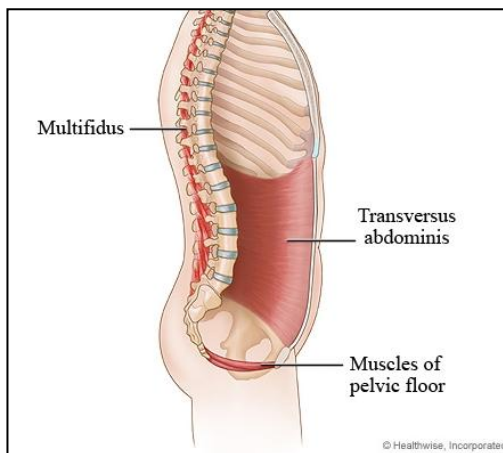


Transverse Abdominus

This is your deepest tummy muscle. From the picture below you can see that it attaches to each rib, each vertebra of the spine and the front of the pelvis. When this muscle contracts it provides lateral compression and support to these structures.

Multifidus

This is the deepest muscle of your spine. From the picture on the right you can see that it attaches to every vertebrae of the spine and the sacrum of the pelvis. When this works it provides support and stability to the spine.



Pelvic Floor

This is a sling of muscle that supports underneath your pelvis. It attaches at your coccyx (tail bone), ischial tuberosities (bones you sit on) and the pubic bone. When this contracts it provides underneath support to your pelvis.

The fourth core muscle, which provides the lid to this muscular support system, is your diaphragm. You do not consciously activate this muscle; however, to ensure that it is working correctly you must make sure that you breathe throughout your exercises – otherwise you are training your muscles in the incorrect way.

The good part is that if you get one of your core muscles working, they will all work together. In a normal individual your core muscles will start working just before you perform a movement – this results in your trunk being stabilised before you move. In people with back pain, research has shown that these muscles are delayed in activating; therefore the back does not have the same level of stability and this can result in pain. In sports people it is important that your core muscles work in an efficient and co-ordinated way to maintain good alignment of your spine and pelvis while your limbs are moving during running and to help prevent injury. It is well documented that a flawed running technique due to poor core muscles can lead to injury such as knee pain and achilles tendinopathy.

Now that you understand a little more about where these muscles are and what they do I want you to practise trying to get them to work on their own, without your rectus abdominus (six pack muscle) and gluts working... and don't forget to breathe! This first exercise is to get you to learn how to activate your core in a static position. The following exercises are more dynamic and help improve your core for running.

How to Activate Your Core

1. Lay on your back with your knees bent.
2. Feel for the front of your pelvis bones (the knobbly bits at the front of your lower stomach).
3. Move your fingers 1 inch in and down.
4. Now pull up your pelvic floor (squeeze your front passage as if you are trying to stop passing water and your back passage as if you are trying to stop passing wind).
5. Squeeze these muscles as much as you can (100%).
6. Can you feel the muscle under your fingers also working? This is your transverse abdominus.
7. Now try relaxing this down to 50% effort, then to 20% effort.
8. You should feel your transverse abdominus working – but only a little.
9. This is how you should activate your core muscles before you do the following exercises. This improves the engagement of the core and therefore improves core muscle strength.

Basic Core Exercises

Bridging (glut max/med/pelvic control)



Activate your pelvic floor



Tilt your pelvis towards you



Peel your vertebrae off the floor one bone at a time

There should be control throughout the movement.

Hold for 10 secs, peel back down to the floor, and repeat 10 times; do 3 sets.

Variations

1. Do with your arms across your chest. →
2. Hold a weight in your hands. While your bottom is raised off the floor move your arms side to side.
3. Lift one leg off the floor, keep your pelvis level and equal. →
4. Do variations 2 and 3 together.

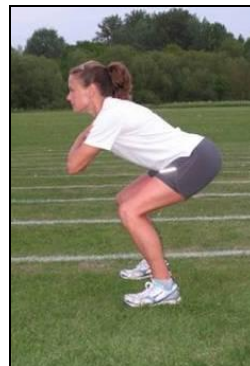


Squats (core muscles/glut max/glut med/quads/hams)



Pull up your pelvic floor to 20%

Knees/hips/second toe aligned



Squat with your bottom out as if you are going to sit down

Keep your back relaxed

Perform until your quads (front of your thigh) or gluts feel fatigued. Perform 3 sets.

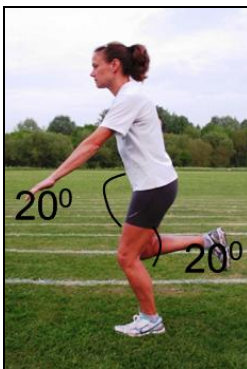
Variations

1. Hold weights as you do this.
2. Perform on one leg.

Bum burner (core muscles/glut max/glut med/erector spinae/quads/hams)



Pull up pelvic floor to 20%



Slight knee bend at hip and knee



Bend from your hip. Keep hip/knee/second toes aligned

Perform until your leg feels fatigued (approx. 15). Repeat 3 sets.

Lunges



Activate pelvic floor to 20%



Step forwards with one foot

Keep hip/knee/second toes aligned

Variations

1. Lunge onto a step to make your gluts work harder.
2. Lunge off a step to improve your eccentric control of your quads.
3. Lunge onto an unstable surface to make your core muscles work harder, e.g. wobble board/cushion/hold Swiss ball/trampoline.
4. Hold weights in your hands.

Helen Real

If you have any queries relating to her article, do speak to Helen or to one of the club coaches. Note that the information given above is of a general nature. If you want medical advice tailored to your individual circumstances, consult a medical professional.

Across the Pond

Each issue, our friend across the pond, Caroline Real, sends us a report on her exploits. Here's her latest instalment!

Well, since the last update, I can now safely confirm that I have a house – big news! It's about a mile or so from the Hollywood sign, in the hills, and we have a pretty cool view. We can run the trail up to the sign in about 20 minutes, which makes for a nice evening jog once the tourists have cleared!

So we've been a bit slack on the racing front recently; the last one was the LA Kings 5km run on 5 March (Tobin's birthday present – what a wife I am!). The LA Kings are the local ice hockey team we often support, so it's fun to go to the race, even if the run is only on the roads round the ice rink.

Tobin came second in his age group (24 mins) and I was third in mine (21 mins) – not so bad for lack of serious preparations, though well short of those fully-trained-by-David-H days!

At the race there were 15ft placards with the race particulars and LA Kings slogans on them. Tobin decided that he wanted one for his workshop at the house. So we got permission to take one, dragged the thing back to the car (knew it was a mistake not bringing the truck that day) and then proceeded to work out how, with the roof down, in the little 1 Series BMW, we were going to transport the thing home on the freeway. We decided to get in, balance it on our heads and hold it with one hand each side on the edge. If we went below 30mph it was fairly stable; however,



above 40mph there was lift! As we entered the freeway, the thing was dangling over the back of the boot of the car, flapping wildly in the wind – and as luck would have it, as we entered the freeway, so did a police car, just behind us. Panic stations! We decided to get off at the next exit: so did the police. We sat at the traffic lights just off the freeway, trying to subtly balance the board on our heads and not look like we were hanging onto it – as the police drew up next to us! It was a moment of pure comedy, but the police just drove on through and didn't pull us over – not sure how we managed it!

So the board finally made it home and has pride of place in the workshop. We will not be doing that again!

Apart from that, I have plenty of new house news – coyotes howling in the garden, watching a snake eat a lizard, enticing the hummingbirds to my feeder, but I digress... That's about all the running news for now, folks! Good luck with the track and fell seasons – enjoy!

Caroline Real

Race Walking: Keeping a Tradition Alive

Congratulations to Peter and Pauline on their appointment as officials at London 2012. Over to Peter to explain what's involved...

As George Richardson mentioned in his *Centenary History of Loughton AC*, the last time the Olympic Games were held in London – in 1948 – Bill Pearson, who at the time was the Club's Secretary and Treasurer, was one of the official timekeepers.



Something that has only ever happened once isn't, perhaps, much of a tradition, but we are keeping it up; Pauline and I have been appointed 'National Technical Officials' (NTOs) for the race walking events in the 2012 Games, which will be taking place in The Mall. An NTO is an official selected by the 'home' governing body (in this case UK Athletics acting on behalf of the British Olympic Association and the Organising Committee) as distinct from one of the tiny number appointed by the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF).

The appointments, it might be mentioned, are provisional pending background checks, so if *they* discover our dreadful secret pasts it will all be off.

Some of you will know that we had the same positions at the Manchester Commonwealth Games and the European Race Walking Cup held in Leamington Spa and, as there is no prospect that the World Race Walking Cup will be held in this country, this might be regarded as the pinnacle of our officiating careers, such as they have been.

So that you can start thinking about the World Athletic Championships, which may or may not arrive here in the future, you may like to know how to get to such a position. The answer is, by never saying no to a request for help: always be ready to turn out, whether at an international event or at an insignificant race in February round the sleet-swept roads of some half-derelict industrial estate in the vicinity of the back-of-beyond. Whether you think that the effort and suffering are justified by the end result is another matter; apparently we do! It might help as well if you invent the system of recording that is now standard at top-level events in this country and can look with something like equanimity upon the prospect of 50 or 60 walkers going 50 times round a 1k course with the leaders lapping at four-and-a-bit minutes and catching up with the tail-enders about the tenth time round.

But, you may ask, with all the electronic systems is there any need for clipboards and pencils? Naturally we would say yes, and the IAAF Official Handbook on organising race walking events says, with reference to what it calls 'Lap Counting Supervisors & Lap Counters' (or recorders as we call them): 'This is one of the most important technical assignments that directly affect the success of the competition.' After all, the whole electronic system can be knocked out by a single lightning stroke, but it is very unlikely that all the human recorders will be fried simultaneously. As an aside, the Handbook says that each recorder should be allocated a maximum of six walkers. Ho, ho, ho, six, indeed; we count ourselves lucky if it's fewer than 20!

Before you ask, no, we can't get you cheap tickets, but you can stand in The Mall free of charge for the walks and in several places for the marathon and the road cycle races; take your brollies, though!

Peter Cassidy

Nutrition Notes: What's in Your Lunchbox?

Picture this: a beautiful summer's day, not a cloud in the sky, you're lying on a blanket laid out on the lush grass, not a care in the world – until you hear your team manager telling you you're doing the 400mH, the Pole Vault, the 3000m Steeplechase, the Hammer and the 4 x 400m Relay. Yes, it's that time of year again: Southern Men's and Women's League matches are upon us. So, how do you fuel up so that you can get the best from your body in your multiple events throughout the day? LL asked nutritionist Rachel Davis for her tips for packing a lunchbox that gives you the energy you need.

Brekkie – The Most Important Meal of the Day

Before you think about packing your coolbox, make sure you start as you mean to go on by having a nutritious breakfast. The type of food you go for here will depend on how you feel – some people like to have a 'filling' breakfast before they compete, while others don't feel like eating at all. The list below caters for both types. Whatever your preference, the aim is to balance protein, fats and carbs, and to fuel your body with slow-release energy, which will keep you feeling perky until you cross that finish line for the last time!

- Low-fat yoghurt and fruit – add a spoonful of oats, or a crushed rye crispbread like a Ryvita. Although fruit is a quick-release energy source, the yoghurt will slow it down, and the wholegrains in oats and rye are good for slow-release energy
- Bacon sandwich on wholemeal bread, without butter and with the fat trimmed off the bacon
- Eggs on wholemeal toast (opt for scrambled or boiled rather than fried)
- Bowl of porridge
- Fruit smoothie – if you can't stomach the idea of food the morning of a race, this drink will keep your energy levels up during the morning. Make your own using banana, berries, avocado, seeds and milk or fruit juice. The avocado and seeds will sustain the release of energy throughout the day as well as adding essential good fats to your breakfast. Make extra so that you can add a bottle to your lunchbox.

As for the timing of your breakfast, listen to your body: as an athlete you know how long a gap you need between eating and competing. Keep your energy levels at their optimum by opting for brunch at about 9:30am. If you must have an early breakfast, top your energy up by having half a banana or a couple of squares of good quality chocolate later in the morning.

Your Lunchbox

You're going to need to stagger your food intake throughout the day, according to your event timetable. The following items will provide you with the mix of slow and quick-release energy you'll need, plus carbohydrate to refuel as soon as possible after exercise. So take a few mouthfuls after each event you do, rather than shovelling the whole lot down in one go!

- Wholegrain bagel with peanut butter – this is a combination of slow and quick-release energy which will digest quickly
- Homemade muffin, banana bread or flapjack, made with wholemeal flour – the oats/wholemeal grains are great for slow-release energy, while the fast-burning sugar in the fruit will provide the energy burst you need
- Pot of yoghurt – this is a portable and nutritious snack
- Some fruit – choose banana, pineapple or mango to replace the sugars lost from exercising – after exercise, there’s a window of several hours when you’re still burning calories and you need to replace lost energy. If you don’t feel you need as much of a sugar hit, choose lower-sugar fruits such as melon, berries or apple
- Sports drink – these rehydrate you, but also replace the electrolytes (sugar and salt) you lose while exercising, which gives them the edge over water. You can save money and make your own by adding 70g of sugar and half a teaspoon of salt to a litre of water (plus some squash or cordial with no added sugar to taste). Alternatively, you can use fruit juice: add 400–600ml of fruit juice and half a teaspoon of salt to a 1-litre bottle and top up with water. The combination of glucose and fructose in the fruit juice version is the mixture of sugars which is most easily absorbed and will help to delay fatigue.

And Finally...

Before you re-live your victories over and over, collapse on the sofa at home and fall asleep in front of a film, make sure you have a balanced dinner. Choose wholegrain carbs, such as wholewheat pasta or brown rice; lean protein, such as turkey, chicken, eggs, fish or leaner cuts of red meat; and lots of veg. But there’s no harm in a treat or two – you’ve definitely earned it!

Rachel Davis

Rachel Davis is a nutritional therapist. If you have any specific questions or would like an in-depth consultation, contact her at:

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Note that the information given here is of a general nature. If you want medical advice tailored to your individual circumstances, consult a medical professional.

Overheard!

At the Llantysilio fell race on 9 April, Tony Maycraft was hot-footing it up a steep incline when he heard a heavy breather on his tail. Tony tells me that this is usually followed by ‘Runner coming through on your right’ or similar, as said heavy breather seeks to overtake.

On this occasion though, Tony was suitably spurred on when his competitor admiringly muttered, ‘No offence, mate, but for a big bloke you don’t half go like the clappers!’ Needless to say, with these words of ‘encouragement’ ringing in his ears, Tony managed to stay in front of his (bony) adversary all the way to the finish.